

# The Cinder Maid

## Europe (Joseph Jacobs)

Once upon a time, though it was not in my time or in your time, or in anybody else's time, there was a great king who had an only son, the prince and heir who was about to come of age. So the king sent round a herald who should blow his trumpet at every four corners where two roads met. And when the people came together he would call out, "O yes, O yes, O yes, know ye that his grace the king will give on Monday sennight" -- that meant seven nights or a week after -- "a royal ball to which all maidens of noble birth are hereby summoned; and be it furthermore known unto you that at this ball his highness the prince will select unto himself a lady that shall be his bride and our future queen. God save the king."

Now there was among the nobles of the king's court one who had married twice, and by the first marriage he had but one daughter, and as she was growing up her father thought that she ought to have someone to look after her. So he married again, a lady with two daughters, and his new wife, instead of caring for his daughter, thought only of her own and favored them in every way. She would give them beautiful dresses but none to her stepdaughter who had only to wear the castoff clothes of the other two. The noble's daughter was set to do all the drudgery of the house, to attend the kitchen fire, and had naught to sleep on but the heap of cinder raked out in the scullery; and that is why they called her Cinder Maid. And no one took pity on her and she would go and weep at her mother's grave where she had planted a hazel tree, under which she sat.

You can imagine how excited they all were when they heard the king's proclamation called out by the herald. "What shall we wear, mother; what shall we wear?" cried out the two daughters, and they all began talking about which dress should suit the one and what dress should suit the other, but when the father suggested that Cinder Maid should also have a dress they all cried out, "What, Cinder Maid going to the king's ball? Why, look at her, she would only disgrace us all." And so her father held his peace.

Now when the night came for the royal ball Cinder Maid had to help the two sisters to dress in their fine dresses and saw them drive off in the carriage with her father and their mother. But she went to her own mother's grave and sat beneath the hazel tree and wept and cried out:

*Tree o' mine, O tree o' me,  
With my tears I've watered thee;  
Make me a lady fair to see,  
Dress me as splendid as can be.*

And with that the little bird on the tree called out to her:

*Cinder Maid, Cinder Maid, shake the tree,  
Open the first nut that you see.*

So Cinder Maid shook the tree and the first nut that fell she took up and opened, and what do you think she saw? -- a beautiful silk dress blue as the heavens, all embroidered with stars, and two little lovely shoon [shoes] made of shining copper. And when she had dressed herself the hazel tree opened

and from it came a coach all made of copper with four milk-white horses, with coachman and footmen all complete. And as she drove away the little bird called out to her:

*Be home, be home ere mid-o'-night  
Or else again you'll be a fright.*

When Cinder Maid entered the ballroom she was the loveliest of all the ladies, and the prince, who had been dancing with her stepsisters, would only dance with her. But as it came towards midnight Cinder Maid remembered what the little bird had told her and slipped away to her carriage. And when the prince missed her he went to the guards at the palace door and told them to follow the carriage. But Cinder Maid when she saw this, called out:

*Mist behind and light before,  
Guide me to my father's door.*

And when the prince's soldiers tried to follow her there came such a mist that they couldn't see their hands before their faces. So they couldn't find which way Cinder Maid went.

When her father and stepmother and two sisters came home after the ball they could talk of nothing but the lovely lady: "Ah, would not you have like to have been there?" said the sisters to Cinder Maid as she helped them to take off their fine dresses. "There was a most lovely lady with a dress like the heavens and shoes of bright copper, and the prince would dance with none but her; and when midnight came she disappeared and the prince could not find her. He is going to give a second ball in the hope that she will come again. Perhaps she will not, and then we will have our chance."

When the time of the second royal ball came round the same thing happened as before; the sisters teased Cinder Maid, saying "Wouldn't you like to come with us?" and drove off again as before. And Cinder Maid went again to the hazel tree over her mother's grave and cried:

*Tree o' mine, O tree o' me,  
Shiver and shake, dear little tree;  
Make me a lady fair to see,  
Dress me as splendid as can be.*

And then the little bird on the tree called out:

*Cinder Maid, Cinder Maid, shake the tree,  
Open the first nut that you see.*

But this time she found a dress all golden brown like the earth embroidered with flowers, and her shoon were made of silver; and when the carriage came from the tree, lo and behold, that was made of silver too, drawn by black horses with trappings all of silver, and the lace on the coachman's and footmen's liveries was also of silver; and when Cinder Maid went to the ball the prince would dance with none but her; and when midnight came round she fled as before. But the prince, hoping to prevent her running away, had ordered the soldiers at the foot of the staircase to pour out honey on the stairs so that her shoes would stick in it. But Cinder Maid leaped from stair to stair and got away just in time, calling out as the soldiers tried to follow her:

*Mist behind and light before,  
Guide me to my father's door.*

And when her sisters got home they told her once more of the beautiful lady that had come in a silver coach and silver shoon and in a dress all embroidered with flowers: "Ah, wouldn't you have like to have been there?" said they.

Once again the prince gave a great ball in the hope that his unknown beauty would come to it. All happened as before; as soon as the sisters had gone Cinder Maid went to the hazel tree over her mother's grave and called out:

*Tree o' mine, O tree o' me,  
Shiver and shake, dear little tree;  
Make me a lady fair to see,  
Dress me as splendid as can be.  
And then the little bird appeared and said:  
Cinder Maid, Cinder Maid, shake the tree,  
Open the first nut that you see.*

And when she opened the nut in it was a dress of silk green as the sea with waves upon it, and her shoes this time were made of gold; and when the coach came out of the tree it was also made of gold, with gold trappings for the horses and for the retainers. And as she drove off the little bird from the tree called out:

*Be home, be home ere mid-o'-night  
Or else again you'll be a fright.*

Now this time, when Cinder Maid came to the ball, she was desirous to dance only with the prince as he with her, and so, when midnight came round, she had forgotten to leave till the clock began to strike, one -- two -- three -- four -- five -- six, -- and then she began to run away down the stairs as the clock struck eight -- nine -- ten. But the prince had told his soldier to put tar upon the lower steps of the stairs; and as the clock struck eleven her shoes stuck in the tar, and when she jumped to the foot of the stairs one of her golden shoes was left behind, and just then the clock struck TWELVE, and the golden coach with its horses and footmen, disappeared, and the beautiful dress of Cinder Maid changed again into her ragged clothes and she had to run home with only one golden shoe.

You can imagine how excited the sister were when they came home and told Cinder Maid all about it, how that the beautiful lady had come in a golden coach in a dress like the sea, with golden shoes, and how all had disappeared at midnight except the golden shoe. "Ah, wouldn't you have liked to have been there?" said they.

Now when the prince found out that he could not keep his lady-love nor trace where she had gone he spoke to his father and showed him the golden shoe, and told him that he would never marry anyone but the maiden who could wear that shoe. So the king, his father, ordered the herald to take round the golden shoe upon a velvet cushion and to go to every four corners where two streets met and sound the trumpet and call out, "O yes, O yes, O yes, be it known unto you all that whatsoever lady of noble birth can fit this shoe upon her foot shall become the bride of his highness the prince and our future queen. God save the king."

And when the herald came to the house of Cinder Maid's father the eldest of her two stepsisters tried on the golden shoe, But it was much too small for her, as it was for every other lady that had tried it up to that time; but she went up into her room and with a sharp knife cut off one of her toes and part

Jacobs, Joseph. "Cinderella." Ashliman, D.L. Folktex: University of Pittsburgh. 17 Oct. 2009 <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/type0510a.html>.

of her heel, and then fitted her foot into the shoe, and when she came down she shoed it to the herald, who sent a message to the palace saying that the lady had been found who could wear the golden shoe.

Thereupon the prince jumped at once upon his horse and rode to the house of Cinder Maid's father. But when he saw the stepsister with the golden shoe, "Ah," he said, "but this is not the lady."

"But," she said, "you promised to marry the one that could wear the golden shoe," And the prince could say nothing, but offered to take her on his horse to his father's palace, for in those days ladies used to ride on a pillion at the back of the gentleman riding on horseback.

Now as they were riding towards the palace her foot began to drip with blood, and the little bird from the hazel tree that had followed them called out:

*Turn and peep, turn and peep,  
There's blood within the shoe;  
A bit is cut from off the heel  
And a bit from off the toe.*

And the prince looked down and saw the blood streaming from her shoe and then he knew that this was not his true bride, and he rode back to the house of Cinder Maid's father; and then the second sister tried her chance; but when she found that her foot wouldn't fit the shoe she did the same as her sister, but all happened as before. The little bird called out:

*Turn and peep, turn and peep,  
There's blood within the shoe;  
A bit is cut from off the heel  
And a bit from off the toe.*

And the prince took her back to her mother's house, and then he asked, "Have you no other daughter?" and the sisters cried out, "No, sir."

But the father said, "Yes, I have another daughter.

And the sisters cried out, "Cinder Maid, Cinder Maid, she could not wear that shoe."

But the prince said, "As she is of noble birth she has a right to try the shoe." So the herald went down to the kitchen and found cinder Maid; and when she saw her golden shoe she took it from him and put it on her foot, which it fitted exactly; and then she took the other golden shoe from underneath the cinders where she had hidden it and put that on too.

Then the herald knew that she was the true bride of his master; and he took her upstairs to where the prince was; when he saw her face, he knew that she was the lady of his love. So he took her behind him upon his horse; and as they rode to the palace the little bird from the hazel tree cried out:

*Some cut their heel, and some cut their toe,  
But she sat by the fire who could wear the shoe.*

And so they were married and lived happy ever afterwards.

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- Source: Joseph Jacobs, *European Folk and Fairy Tales* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1916), pp. 1-12.
  - This versions of "Cinderella" is Jacobs' "reconstruction" of the story's original form, based on his analysis of the common features of hundreds of variants collected throughout Europe.

- Joseph Jacobs was born in 1854 in Australia. He immigrated in 1872 to England, graduated from Cambridge University, and became one of the best known folklorists of his era. In 1900 he immigrated to the United States, where he died in 1916.